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# **The geography of travel journalism: Mapping the flow of travel stories about foreign countries**

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## **Abstract**

While the study of foreign news flows has received considerable attention from communication scholars for quite some time, it has typically focused on political or 'hard' news, at the expense of other types of journalistic content. This paper argues that, as the foreign news hole is shrinking, travel journalism is becoming an increasingly important source of information about foreign countries in the news media. It reports the results of a comparative study of newspaper travel sections in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and argues that travel journalism often replicates the imbalances found in foreign news flows. Well-known factors – such as regionalism, powerful nations, cultural proximity, the role played by big neighbours, and the diversity of coverage – are also powerful determinants in travel journalism. At the same time, a country's tourist behaviour also plays a role but is often overshadowed by other factors.

## **Key words**

Travel journalism, lifestyle journalism, foreign news, news flow, news geography, international communication, news selection, content analysis

## **Introduction**

The way in which audiences are told about events outside their own country's borders through the news media has been of concern for communication scholars for quite some time. Dating back to the 1920s and 1930s (Woodward, 1930), the study of foreign news flows reached considerable global popularity during the 1960s and 1970s, when heated debate over a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) took place primarily at UNESCO (for example, Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Sreberny-Mohammadi, Nordenstreng & Stevenson, 1984). Interest has waned little over the decades since, with a myriad of studies conducted in the field. As a result of the impressive range of work, we have a reasonably good understanding of the ways in which audiences experience the world through the news and the factors that may play a role in journalistic decision-making.

However, there is some evidence to suggest the amount of foreign news (and hard news more generally) has been shrinking in many countries (Altmeyden, 2010; Riffe et al., 1994), arguably leading to a narrower representation of the world. At the same time, softer news formats, such as lifestyle journalism, have been growing exponentially. In relation to content about foreign countries in particular, travel journalism may play an increasingly relevant role in additionally shaping audiences' views of the world. Yet, while travel journalism's coverage of foreign nations has received some attention from tourism scholars, it has thus far been almost completely ignored by scholars concerned with international communication. Because travel journalism aims to entertain and provide a service to the travelling public (Hanusch, 2010), travel stories may offer newspapers an opportunity to correct some of the imbalances that exist in foreign news reporting. Assessing whether this is the case, or whether foreign travel story flows display similar characteristics to foreign news

flows, is thus crucial in advancing our knowledge of how audiences learn about the world through their news media.

To address the gap in research, this paper reports the results of a comparative study of travel sections in eight newspapers from four countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Extending the existing literature on news geography (Wilke, Heimprecht & Cohen, 2012), the study examines the geography of travel journalism in presenting a map of the world as it can be found in these four countries' travel sections. As the discussion will show, some of the imbalances that have previously been found in foreign news content are also visible in travel sections. At the same time, they also mirror their country's travelling behaviours by focusing on popular tourist destinations, evidence of their service journalism mentality.

### **Foreign news flows**

While the study of foreign news can be traced back almost 100 years, it was only in the 1960s and 70s that the way in which other countries are portrayed in the news received sustained attention from communication scholars. According to Wu (2000), Schramm's (1959) study of foreign news across 14 different newspapers was probably the first of its kind. One crucial catalyst in the growing popularity of foreign news flows as a field of study was the debate over NWICO, which saw politicians from developing countries argue for a restructure of what they saw as an imbalanced flow of foreign news. Many from the so-called Third World believed they suffered severe disadvantages in the foreign news of Western countries (Hachten, 1999). NWICO advocates' ultimate aims were for developing countries to produce more stories of their own and hence create a more positive image of themselves in order to counteract the dominant focus on wars, crises and disasters. There was strong opposition to the proposal from Western countries, who saw it as an attempt to politicise foreign news and sacrifice press freedom. With the UK and US eventually leaving UNESCO, the proposal never reached any real resolution (Hachten, 1999).

Nevertheless, the debate over the NWICO did spur on a generation of researchers who would examine in some considerable depth the flow of foreign news. Between 1970 and 1986 alone, at least 150 research papers examined the flow of international news, including two worldwide studies under the auspices of the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) and UNESCO (Tsang et al., 1988). In fact, Wilke (1987) argued that 'no subject in communication research in recent years has stimulated greater interest on a world-wide level than questions of foreign news reporting and international news flow'.

Much of this research draws on the theory of news factors, most prominently on the theory of newsworthiness outlined by Norwegian researchers Galtung and Ruge (1965), who analysed four Norwegian newspapers' coverage of three foreign crises during the 1960s. The study focussed on eight general news factors – Frequency, Threshold, Unambiguity, Meaningfulness, Consonance, Unexpectedness, Continuity, Composition – as well as four culturally determined news factors – Reference to Elite Nations, Reference to Elite People, Reference to Persons and Reference to Something Negative. Galtung and Ruge's theory of news factors has received substantial criticism (Hjarvard, 2002; Rosengren, 1974) and has also been updated and extended in recent times (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). Yet, despite its shortcomings the theory has been employed in numerous analyses of news selections, leading McQuail (1994: 270) to call it the 'most influential explanation' of news factors.

Against this theoretical and political background, the first UNESCO study, conducted over two weeks in 1979 and across 29 countries, found that, primarily, foreign news coverage had concentrated on events in a country's immediate geographic region (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1984). Political powers were the second most frequent topic, followed by

countries who experienced crises or disasters. Countries on the periphery, who were of little importance in the global political system, were rarely covered unless they experienced crises or disasters. The researchers also found an imbalance of news flow, with developing countries receiving far more news about developed countries than vice-versa. In the second major international study, conducted in 1995 and including 46 countries, researchers found geographic proximity and national linkages remained the dominant news values in media worlds mostly defined by politics and economics (Stevenson, 1997). Further analysis by Wu (2000; 2003) concluded that trade, population, the presence of international news agencies as well as geographic proximity were principal determinants of whether a country would make the news. Similarly, Ito's (2009) analysis of the data from the 1995 study found five factors influenced foreign news flows: the existence of an international news agency in the covered country, the amount of trade and geographic distance between countries, but also a common language and the covered country's defence budget (ostensibly a sign of military power). A meta-analysis of 55 research papers showed that factors influencing foreign news selection included the gross national product of a nation, trade volume, regionalism, population as well as geographic size, geographic, political, economic and cultural proximity, eliteness, communication resources and infrastructure (Wu, 1998).

While many of the early studies had primarily focused their analysis on the print media, in recent years scholars have included more regularly television news, as well as online news, based on the premise that first television and now online were the primary channels through which audiences followed the news. While studies examining US broadcast news existed for some time (Larson and Hardy, 1977; Gonzenbach, Arant & Stevenson, 1992), Heinderyckx (1993) studied 17 news programs across eight Western European countries, finding that groups of Germanic- and Romance-culture channels existed, which shaped their news approach and coverage. Yet, television has generally not been as popular a medium for research as newspapers. Wu (1998) found that more than half the studies of foreign news flows had studied newspapers, while only 28 per cent examined television. In a more recent effort to redress this imbalance, the major comparative study 'Foreign TV News' examined foreign news across 17 diverse countries (Wilke et al., 2012). The analysis confirmed that regionalism, the role of superpowers and crises still played a major role in news decision-making. Overall, Europe was the most heavily covered continent, with North America and the Middle East in second and third place. In terms of individual countries, the US and UK were the most frequently covered countries, leading Wilke et al. (2012: 319) to conclude that 'the picture of the world is still uneven, particularly with respect to regions of the world that are totally underrepresented'.

With the arrival of the Internet, online news has become an even more important source of information for audiences, and a number of studies have found that traditional imbalances and selections are replicated on the web (d'Haenens, Jankowski and Heuvelman, 2004; Gasher and Gabriele, 2004; Himelboim, Chang and McCreery, 2010; Wu, 2007). Determinants for foreign news are still similar, with Wu (2007) finding that trade volume and the presence of international news agencies were important predictors also in the online environment.

Yet, the vast majority of these studies of foreign news flows have typically focussed only on the news sections of various media. At a time that space for foreign news has been become smaller (Riffe et al., 1994), however, and other types of journalism such as lifestyle journalism are taking up an increasing amount of space across all news media, it is imperative that we examine the ways in which foreign countries may be displayed through other sections of the news media. This relates in particular to travel journalism, which is to a significant extent concerned with the coverage of foreign lands, and which has experienced immense growth over recent decades. In many Western countries newspaper travel sections, as well as

travel shows on television, have become integral parts of media offerings. At the turn of the millennium, the growth in travel journalism even led US travel editor Thomas Swick (2001: 65) to proclaim that ‘in this day of disappearing foreign bureaus, the travel section is many papers’ only in-house window on the world at large’. Hence, the way travel sections might be displaying a similar or different picture of the world is of relevance to better understand newspaper coverage of the world.

### **Travel journalism and foreign destinations**

While foreign news flows have been examined in extraordinary depth, travel journalism research is still in its infancy, despite Fürsich & Kavoori’s (2001) argument for its growing importance to international communication more than a decade ago. Nevertheless, recent years have seen a small increase in the literature on the topic, with the analysis of travel content the most commonly applied method of analysis (Hanusch, 2010). Not all of this work has occurred from a communication or journalism studies perspective, however. A large number of studies have been conducted by tourism scholars concerned with whether travel journalism content was in line with marketing expectations. For example, Pan & Ryan (2007) have developed an analytical framework that would allow destination marketers assess travel stories’ value to them. At the same time, the ways in which foreign destinations are portrayed through travel writing has been of concern to some critical tourism scholars. Their findings have shown that travel stories can be accused of the same ethnocentric biases levelled against foreign news content. This includes: a) a narrow focus on certain destinations, and b) a marginalisation of host cultures.

That foreign travel stories have a relatively narrow focus in terms of global coverage has been shown by a small number of studies. A small study of travel segments broadcast on the Travel Channel, for example, found that 50% of them focused on the United States, with a further 30% on Western Europe (Mahmood, 2005), to the detriment of other regions around the world. A similar trend was found in a study of three Australian newspapers’ travel sections, which showed that North America, Europe and Southeast Asia were the most regularly covered regions (Hill-James, 2006). A more recent study of six Australian newspapers’ travel sections confirmed this, with the three regions accounting for a combined 56.3% of all stories (Hanusch, 2011). The countries of the Pacific Islands – a geographically proximate region popular with tourists – accounted only for a combined 3.9%. Such findings demonstrate that factors such as a focus on elite nations, cultural proximity and regionalism all appear to be significant criteria for selection in travel journalism as they are in foreign news reporting.

The marginalisation of host cultures is also common in travel journalism, with studies finding that locals tend to only be included when they are involved in the tourism industry. Typically travel journalism tends to focus on the experience of the presenter or author rather than host cultures (Dunn, 2005; Hanefors & Mossberg, 2002; Santos, 2004; 2006). Galasinski and Jaworski’s (2003: 131) analysis of travel stories in the *Guardian* found that citizens of tourist destinations were typically represented as homogeneous groups, representatives of (stereotypical) national or community characteristics, or as “featureless” helpers to the travellers’. Hanusch (2011) found that three out of five Australian newspaper travel stories did not include any quotes, and the vast majority of those that did, only quoted locals working in the tourism industry.

This paper is concerned primarily with the first aspect, ie. the amount of reporting on various destinations. It is thus located in the tradition of news geography, an approach developed in the 1980s and which describes ‘which countries or regions of the world are represented in the news’ (Wilke et al., 2012: 305). Taking an approach such as this allows researchers to build a ‘map’ of the world in terms of news coverage. The geography of travel

journalism therefore refers to travel sections' coverage of the world in terms of countries and/or regions. In addition, this study goes beyond previous analysis of travel journalism by taking a comparative approach. The main benefit of comparative research in journalism and communication is that it allows us to examine whether theories can be generalized across cross-cultural differences (Hanitzsch, 2009). Comparative communication research has in recent years grown considerably in size and attention, as scholars around the globe attempt to better contextualize and test the theories they have developed over time. As Livingstone (2012: 416) argues, comparative research has become 'commonplace' and is indeed necessary to understand media phenomena. So far, however, there have been very few comparative studies of travel journalism, and this study will allow us to examine whether some of the findings from one-nation studies can be extrapolated more broadly.

### Methodology

Because the literature on travel journalism is only still emerging, this paper developed research questions rather than hypotheses. The research questions were:

RQ1: Which world regions and countries do newspaper travel stories focus on?

RQ2: What are the similarities and difference across countries of publication?

RQ3: How does the geography of travel journalism compare to what we know about foreign news geography?

To examine the research questions, the travel sections of two newspapers each from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom were studied during the first half of 2009, resulting in a sample of 26 issues each. In selecting the four countries, a 'most-similar systems design' was employed (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 32), which is based on 'the belief that systems as similar as possible with respect to as many features as possible constitute the optimal samples for comparative inquiry'. This approach allows researchers to minimize the number of contributing variables by choosing countries which share a number of characteristics. As Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom all share similar political and cultural characteristics, have similar media systems and historical connections, they were deemed an appropriate sample for further examination. The similarities of these four countries allow us to isolate their differences in, for example, tourist behaviour, more easily in order to examine the influence that tourist behaviour may have on the geography of travel journalism.

Within each country, the two leading providers of quality newspaper travel stories were chosen. Quality newspapers were chosen because of their influence as agenda-setting media, as well as the fact there are no real tabloid newspapers in New Zealand, which could have led to an uneven analysis had tabloid newspapers from other countries been included. Further, an effort was made to include newspapers from different owners to represent editorial variety within countries. The chosen newspapers are: *The Australian*, *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia); *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star* (Canada); *New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion-Post* (New Zealand); *The Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph* (United Kingdom). Hardcopy versions of the newspapers were used for analysis. The Australian, Canadian and UK newspapers were examined on Saturdays, while the New Zealand newspapers publish their travel sections on Tuesdays. The timeframe of analysis was each week from January 10 until July 7, 2009, covering 26 issues of each sampled newspaper. Thus, a total of 208 travel sections were examined for analysis.

Only travel stories which focused on an individual country or domestic region were included in the study. Stories which focused on a theme and discussed a variety of countries or domestic regions were excluded. Editorials, reader questions, celebrity travel Q&As or listings of travel tips and deals were also excluded. Size and page placement was recorded for each story, however, the analysis which follows only reports the number of stories instead of

story size. This is because the publications examined here ranged in size from tabloid to broadsheet format (with the exception of Canada even within countries), making comparisons within and across countries extremely difficult. Because the vast majority of stories were feature stories which took up a significant part of a page, a comparison of story size would also be rendered not very meaningful in travel content analysis. Unlike in foreign news sections, where often numerous stories appear on one page, including short news briefs, travel stories typically tend to cover one or two tabloid pages, or half to a full broadsheet page.

Stories were further coded in terms of whether they covered domestic or foreign travel destinations, and, if the latter applied, which country the destination was in. To determine the foreign location, the United Nations (2009) classification of 241 countries and territories was employed. Only one country could be coded per story, any multiple-country stories, as discussed earlier, were excluded from the study. Stories were coded by three coders. Inter-coder reliability tests, conducted on 10% of the overall sample, resulted in a Krippendorff's alpha score of .976 for country of location and .995 for foreign/domestic news.

A total of 1074 travel stories across 208 issues were examined for analysis across the eight newspapers, equating to an overall average of 5.2 stories per newspaper per week. As Table 1 demonstrates, however, there were some pronounced differences among the various countries. Australian travel sections published the largest number of stories, at 14.2 per week. This was followed by British newspapers at 10.5 and Canada at 8.9 stories per week. The least amount of travel stories came from New Zealand, where the *New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion-Post* combined for only 7.7 stories per week.

--- *Insert Table 1 around here* ---

All travel sections included a significant amount of domestic travel stories, albeit to a different extent. In Australia, only roughly two out of every three stories (65%) focused on an overseas destination, as opposed to Canada, where 83.2% of stories were about a foreign country. In between these two extremes were New Zealand and the United Kingdom, where 69.7% and 73.5%, respectively, were stories about overseas destinations. Altogether 773 foreign travel stories (71.9% of all stories) were published across the eight newspapers. The differences between countries in the proportion of foreign stories are statistically significant,  $\chi^2(3)=24.125$ ,  $p<.001$ .

## Results

A total of 116 countries from all inhabited continents were covered in the travel stories which appeared during the timeframe of this study, equating to 48.1% of all countries. Firstly, the analysis will explore the regions which were most frequently covered, before moving on to individual countries. Europe is the most heavily covered continent overall, receiving a combined 32.5% of stories from the four countries' newspapers (Table 2).

--- *Insert Table 2 around here* ---

The Americas are second, at 25.9%, followed closely by Asia at 23.3%. Oceania received a total of 12.7%, despite the fact two of the examined countries are located in this geographic region. Just as has been the case in foreign news, Africa is a blank spot on the world map of travel journalism at only 5.7% of coverage. Australia, Canada and New Zealand devoted 5% or less of their travel stories to the continent, while British newspapers gave Africa marginally more coverage, at 10% of all stories. The most popular sub-regions in terms of

newspaper travel coverage are in Northern and Western Europe (18.5%), Northern America (16%) and Southern Europe (12%). No other sub-region received more than 10% coverage overall. Compared to official tourism statistics, the results are somewhat comparable, in that Europe is the most popular tourism region in the world (World Tourism Organization, 2010). However, Asia and the Pacific combined are the second most popular destinations, with 26.6% of all global travellers spending their holiday there. The Americas receive only 15.9% of global tourists, which is much less than the coverage they received in the four countries studied here. Africa receives 5.2% of tourists, comparable to the level of coverage it was given in the studied newspapers.

The findings demonstrate that travel journalism exhibits some very strong similarities to foreign news reporting in terms of the fact that regionalism plays an extremely important part in deciding which countries are covered. Each of the countries whose travel sections were examined concentrated the largest proportion of their coverage on a region close to them. This is not surprising given the proximity that makes it easier for readers to travel to their immediate region. Australian newspapers focused on Asia (37.1% of all stories), Canadian newspapers on the Americas (43.5%), New Zealand newspapers on Oceania (35%) and British newspapers on Europe (45.5%). If one breaks down these continental regions, a more nuanced picture emerges, however. The most frequently covered regions in Australian newspapers with equal coverage were Northern and Western Europe as well as South-Eastern Asia (17.1% each). In third place was East Asia, followed by Northern America. Regions which received very little coverage included all African regions, Central America and the Caribbean, Central and Western Asia, as well as Eastern Europe. Even the Pacific Islands did not receive much coverage at only 6.7%, despite their geographic proximity and status as a popular tourist destination for Australians.

In Canadian newspaper travel sections, the United States are by far the most frequently covered country. At 27.5% of all stories, Canada's big neighbour to the South receives more coverage than all the Asian countries combined, and almost as much coverage as all of Europe. Following the Northern America region as the most popular destinations in terms of coverage are Northern, Western and Southern Europe, as well as Central America and the Caribbean. Africa received scant attention at only 3.1% of all stories, as did Oceania, which received the same level of coverage. A big neighbour, this time to the West, was also an important origin for travel stories in New Zealand newspapers. Australia made up 26.4% of all stories, more than any other continent. The second-most important sub-region for New Zealand newspapers was Northern America (14.3%), followed by Northern, Western and Southern Europe. In the United Kingdom, travel sections focussed predominantly on their immediate vicinity in Northern and Western Europe (26%), Southern Europe (18%), as well as Northern America (14%). The Asian continent received only 12% of coverage, slightly more than Africa.

Having examined the world's regions and their coverage, the next section will examine the frequency with which individual countries were covered in the travel sections of Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and UK newspapers. Firstly, the breadth of coverage needs to be examined. None of the examined newspapers covered all of the 116 countries reported on across the sample, with the widest coverage of countries occurring in Australia, where travel stories were written about 71 different countries (Table 3).

**--- Insert Table 3 around here ---**

Incidentally, Australian newspapers also had published the largest number of stories overall. Canada and the United Kingdom covered 59 different countries each, and New Zealand, which had also published the smallest number of stories overall, only reported from



42 different countries. A correlation analysis shows that the more travel stories in total were published in a country, the greater was the variety of countries covered ( $r = -.962$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In order to measure the diversity of countries about which stories were published, the country concentration index (CCI), which has been applied previously in foreign news research (Wilke et al., 2012), was analysed for each country. The CCI measures the geographic and political concentration of news coverage by calculating the portion of the overall coverage which can be attributed to a certain number of countries. Analysis of the CCI shows that, considering the top 5 countries, the largest amount of diversity exists in Australia. Here, one-third of all stories focus on only five countries. At the other end of the spectrum, the top 5 countries reported on in New Zealand made up just over half of all stories. Taking into account the top 10 countries, all four examined countries achieve a CCI of higher than 50%, with Australia confirmed as offering the most dispersed and New Zealand the least dispersed view of the world.

An examination of the overall top 10 story destinations shows that the United States – regularly the most frequently covered country in foreign news – also tops the list of most frequently covered countries in travel journalism (Table 4).

**--- Insert Table 4 around here ---**

In fact, the US received more than twice as many stories as the second-placed destination, Australia. Further, the US is the only country to have featured in at least 10 stories in each of the countries studied here (New Zealand: 15; Australia: 20; United Kingdom: 25; Canada: 53). Stories about Australia made up 5% of the total, albeit with the majority coming from New Zealand newspapers, which published 37 (68.5%) of those stories. France, the world's leading tourist destination, received 43 stories, closely followed by Italy. In the case of France, UK newspapers accounted for 23 of the stories, or 53.5%. Coverage of Italy was relatively even across the four studied countries. In fifth place, the UK received a total of 40 stories, half of which came from Australian newspapers, however. Relatively far behind with only 27 stories is India, followed by Thailand (22 stories). For each of those countries, Australian newspapers accounted for around half of the stories. The Top 10 is rounded out by Spain (18 stories), Argentina and Japan (16 stories each).

Closer inspection of the top 10 reveals somewhat of an imbalance, as each studied country could not cover its own country as part of foreign travel stories. This means the fact Australia placed second overall is more surprising, considering that Australian newspapers could not contribute to the total for Australia, while in the case of the US, all four studied countries contributed. In order to adjust for this, it was decided to divide each country's story total by four, while dividing the totals for Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK by only three. This resulted in a slight shift in rankings. The US still topped the list, followed by Australia. In third, however, was the UK, which leapfrogged France and Italy. Those two were followed by India and Thailand, with New Zealand now in eighth place, having overtaken Spain and Argentina. This is not a dramatic shift, but it may indicate a slightly more accurate picture of foreign travel coverage.

Compared to the world's top tourism destinations, we can see some interesting differences. France, for a long time the leading tourism destination on earth, only ranked third (or fourth if one uses the adjusted measurement) on the list of most frequently covered countries. In contrast, the US, the second most popular destination as measured by international tourist arrivals, was by far the most frequently covered country in travel journalism. The third most popular destination, Spain, ranked only just in the top 10 of covered countries, and China, the fourth-most popular destination, did not even make the top 10. In fact, China only received a total of 15 stories (1.9%), giving it 12<sup>th</sup> place on the list of

most frequently covered countries. Other popular tourist destinations, such as Turkey, Germany, Malaysia and Mexico also did not make it into the list of top 10 destinations in terms of newspaper coverage.

This overall comparison, however, cannot take account of some of the national variations, particularly in terms of tourist behaviours, and the imbalance in the total number of stories published in the four countries may mask some of what is actually going on. Hence, it is important to examine the top 10 destinations for each individual country in order to allow a better understanding of the kinds of countries covered as well as the way in which these may be similar or different to each country's top outbound tourism destinations. Table 5 presents a comparison of the top 10 covered countries as well as tourism destinations for each of the four studied countries.

**--- Insert Table 5 around here ---**

The top two countries featured in Australian travel sections are the United Kingdom and the United States, each of which received 8.3% of the overall coverage. They are followed by Italy, New Zealand and Thailand. Six of the 10 most frequently covered countries are also among the top tourism destinations for Australian travellers, evidence that in general Australian travel coverage is somewhat in line with Australians' travel behaviours. At the same time, there are some differences in terms of the relative rankings. For example, the US and UK only rank second and fourth, respectively, in the list of top tourist destinations. New Zealand, by far Australians' most favourite tourism destination at twice the amount of tourists as the US, only ranks fourth in terms of newspaper coverage. Only two stories (0.8%) were written about Fiji during the research timeframe, despite the fact 3.8% of Australian tourists travel there. Similarly, Indonesia received only 4.5% of newspaper coverage, while accounting for 8.3% of overseas departures. Interestingly, however, Australian newspaper coverage was more dispersed than its tourist departures, with the CCI (10) at 52.9%, while the top 10 destination countries for Australian combined for 65.8% of all outbound tourists.

This situation is similar in Canada, where the CCI (10) was at 59.6%, while the top 10 destinations accounted for a combined 91.1%. This figure is, however, heavily skewed due to the supreme importance that the US plays in Canadians' overnight trips. Almost seven in 10 international overnight departures from Canada went to the US in 2009. Not surprisingly, the US also ranked top of the list of travel story destinations at 27.5%. In terms of the other countries in the respective top 10 lists, however, there are important differences. Mexico, the second-most popular destination for Canadians with 4.6% of overall departures, only received 2.6% of foreign travel story coverage. Cuba and the Dominican Republic, which together account for 7% of Canadian departures, did not even make the list of the top 10 most frequently covered countries. Both countries combined for barely three stories, or 1.5% of stories overall.

In New Zealand, Australia was easily the most frequently covered country as well as the top tourism destination. However, the second-most popular destination in terms of departures, Fiji, only received three stories, or 2.1% of the overall total. Instead, the US and UK were ranked much higher, despite receiving similar amounts of New Zealand tourists to Fiji. Overall, the newspaper coverage in NZ was more dispersed than its tourist destinations indicate, with a CCI (10) score of 62.9%, compared to the top 10 departure countries accounting for 75.3% of the traveling population. In the United Kingdom, the CCI (10) was at 55.5%, while the 10 most popular countries combined for 68.2% of all departures. Seven of the 10 most popular destinations for tourists are also represented in the top 10 list of countries covered in UK newspapers, yet once again we see some important differences. The

most heavily covered country, the United States, received 12.5% of all stories, but only accounted for 5.4% of tourist departures in 2009. On the other hand, Spain – which hosts almost one in five UK tourists – only received 4% of newspaper travel coverage. Australia, which was covered in 6.5% of travel stories, is not even in the top 10 of UK tourist destinations, and Ireland, the third most-popular country in terms of departures did not make the top 10 list of covered countries.

## Discussion

The results presented here show some pronounced similarities between foreign news and travel stories and their influencing factors. This study has found that a number of salient factors present in foreign news reporting also appear to influence the selection of countries that are covered in travel journalism. These include regionalism, powerful nations, cultural proximity, the role played by big neighbours, and the diversity of coverage. In addition, the tourist behaviour of citizens does appear to play at least a part in the overall mix.

Regionalism – such a strong feature in foreign news (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985; Wu, 1998) – is, not surprisingly, also an extremely salient component of the geography of travel journalism in Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and United Kingdom newspapers. Each of the studied countries focused heavily on regions close to them: Australia on Asia, Canada on the United States, New Zealand on Australia and Oceania, and the UK on Europe. The only surprise perhaps was the comparatively low attention Australian newspapers gave to New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, arguably Australia's most immediate neighbouring region. Nevertheless, Asia has become a region of growing importance for Australia over the past two decades or so, and the results show similarities to existing foreign news flow studies in their dominance of stories from Southeast Asia, Western Europe and North America, while Oceania has never been a region of much interest to Australian foreign news (Grundy, 1985; Henningham, 1996; Putnis et al., 2000).

The role the United States plays in the reporting of foreign news also appears to be an important aspect of travel journalism. The world's main superpower received more than twice the amount of stories as any other country, despite the fact it was the most popular tourist destination only in Canada. This finding is reminiscent of numerous foreign news flows studies, which also found the US to be the most dominant global newsmaker (Wilke et al., 2012; Wu, 1998). Individual studies from the examined countries have confirmed the dominance of reporting on the US in those nations (Budd, 1964; Putnis et al., 2000; Robinson and Sparkes, 1976). While the US did rank in the top 4 most popular destinations in each of the studied countries, the fact that other, at least similarly popular destinations, received considerably less coverage suggests that the US receives unevenly more attention in travel journalism.

An additional factor may lie in the cultural proximity the US has to each of the four studied countries. Cultural proximity has long been argued to be a dominant factor in foreign news decisions (Galtung and Ruge, 1970; Schulz, 1976; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001), and the results suggest similar processes may be at play in travel journalism. In a similar way to the US, the UK received quite a large amount of coverage in the travel sections, arguably not in line with its popularity as a tourist destination, at least if the popularity of other countries is taken into account. This is not surprising, as the other three countries studied here – Australia, Canada and New Zealand – are all former British colonies, and much of their population has British roots. Countries which are culturally more distant, such as China, Turkey, Malaysia or Mexico – all four of which rank in the top 10 of the world's tourist destinations – received much less attention. The relatively low visibility of Latin America, the Pacific Islands and especially Africa is also reminiscent of the oft-repeated arguments over an imbalance of foreign news flows (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1984; Hachten, 1999). At the same time, it

needs to be pointed out that the coverage given to these regions overall was comparable to the share of international tourists which the continent receives. Quite simply, not many Canadians, Australians or New Zealanders travel to Africa, and travel sections appear to take the view that they want to offer their readers a service by focusing on destinations to which many travel. 'Exotic' destinations are thus of less relevance.

The 'big neighbour syndrome', which has been apparent in many foreign news flow studies (Hackett, 1989; Hart, 1963; Ichikawa, 1978; Robinson & Sparkes, 1976; Wilke et al., 2012), was also confirmed as a factor in travel journalism. In Canada, the big neighbour United States was covered most frequently, accounting for just over one quarter of all foreign travel stories. The situation was similar in New Zealand, where Australia received a similar level of coverage. This is a situation very similar to foreign news coverage in Canada and New Zealand (Nnaemeka & Richstad, 1980; Robinson & Sparkes, 1976). At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that the US and Australia are also the most popular tourist destinations for Canadians and New Zealanders, respectively. Thus, the two factors are likely inextricably linked.

In terms of the newspapers' diversity of coverage of the world, the finding from foreign news flow studies that the more items overall a publication devoted to foreign news, the wider the diversity of the covered countries was (Wilke et al., 2012), also holds true for the geography of travel journalism. Australian newspapers, which published the largest number of stories overall, also reported on the widest number of countries, while New Zealand, the country with the lowest number of stories, covered the smallest number of countries. The analysis of the country concentration indices confirmed these findings. However, while it is difficult to compare country concentration indices between foreign news and travel stories due to a lack of comparative data, the comparison with the diversity of tourist destinations for each country shows that newspapers were probably more diverse in their coverage than the tourist behaviour of their country indicates. For example, the CCI (10) for Australia was 52.9%, while the top 10 tourist destinations accounted for 65%. The situation was similar in the other three countries, as Table 5 shows.

One common determinant of foreign news, which was, unsurprisingly, found to be of little relevance in travel journalism due to its different reasons for existence, is whether a country is experiencing a political or military crisis (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Wu, 2000). The countries of the Middle East, regularly a key region for foreign news (Wilke et al., 2012; Wu, 1998), did not feature significantly in the travel sections examined here. This could be expected, because 'travel publications celebrate travel' (Austin, 1999: 10), rather than focus on countries which might be perceived as dangerous or unstable. In fact, the opposite is likely true: If a country experiences a political or military crisis, it becomes less desirable as a holiday destination. Hence, crises may be a determinant in travel journalism, but a determinant in rejecting, rather than selecting or generating stories.

Finally, a nation's tourist behaviour does appear to play at least a certain part in the geography of travel journalism. Italy is not normally a country that receives a large amount of attention in Australian, Canadian or New Zealand foreign news (perhaps to a slightly higher degree in UK news), yet it was either the third or fourth most frequently covered destination in each country's travel sections, owing to its status as a globally significant tourist destination based on historical significance. Central America and the Caribbean make up a sizable portion of Canadian travel stories, despite receiving relatively little attention in Canadian foreign news (Hackett, 1989; Wilke et al., 2012). In Australian foreign news, Oceania receives scant attention (Dorney, 2000; Putnis, 1998), but the region receives just over 10% of overall travel coverage. While this is still not in line with tourist behaviour, it is at least more frequent than foreign news coverage.

## Conclusion

By focusing on the geography of travel journalism, this paper aimed to contribute to and especially broaden the horizon of the study of foreign news flows. While the vast majority of studies have been concerned with the way foreign nations are portrayed through the (hard) news reporting of the media, the premise of this study was that, faced with a shrinking foreign news hole, the analysis of the journalistic reporting on foreign nations needs to go beyond just the news and include the growing area of lifestyle, and in particular travel journalism. While the different sections may have different *raison d'être*, they are still part of the same newspaper and may affect the image readers may have of the world. In mapping the way newspaper travel sections in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom covered the world, the paper established the usefulness of including an analysis of the geography of travel journalism in showing some of the important similarities and differences to foreign news reporting. Principally, the analysis found that the geography of travel journalism is strikingly similar to the geography of foreign news, and aspects such as regionalism, powerful nations, cultural proximity, the role played by big neighbours, and the diversity of coverage are important criteria in each of the two areas. In travel journalism, the presence of certain popular tourist destinations does play a role, but it often does not make up for the broader imbalance towards proximate and powerful countries.

One can argue that, by largely replicating in their travel sections the flow of foreign news and its imbalances, newspapers are missing out on an opportunity. Travel sections, because they do not typically depend on news events to select stories, could potentially provide a more complex and multi-faceted view of the world. Entertainment and the reporting of foreign cultures are central component of travel journalism (Hanusch, 2010; 2012), and if one wants to mainly entertain readers, one is able to cover regions or countries which are typically outside the tourists' gaze. Yet, other analyses of the type of coverage that destinations receive through travel journalism have found that destinations are often covered in stereotypical ways (Dunn, 2005; Hanefors & Mossberg, 2002; Hanusch, 2011; Santos, 2004, 2006). At the same time, travel journalists see a crucial need to provide their audiences with information they can use in their travels, and are thus forced to focus on destinations which are already popular with these audiences. This does not always appear to happen, however, as the analysis here has pointed out. Instead, some popular destinations – often the less culturally proximate or less powerful ones – are reported less frequently than others.

Perhaps a related facet in the selection of foreign travel stories is the fact that many newspapers rely almost exclusively on subsidised or free travel to send their reporters on assignment (Austin, 1999; Hanusch, 2012). It could be argued that some countries – perhaps the more powerful and wealthier ones – are more likely to offer such 'familiarisation' trips which are common in travel journalism. For example, Australia has a well-funded visiting journalists' program, which tries to target countries from which Australia aims to receive tourists (Mackellar & Fenton, 2000). This may be to a significant degree influencing the story selections of various countries' newspapers. A nation's ability to provide free or subsidised travel to travel journalists, and the countries such programs target, may thus play a crucial role in determining the geography of travel journalism. It is an aspect which deserves sustained scrutiny in future research, as such information is generally not freely available.

This study has necessarily had a number of limitations. Firstly, it only focused on the geography of travel journalism, without taking into account the ways in which the various countries were portrayed. Such in-depth analysis, which was beyond the scope of this paper, could ascertain the types of activities stories focused on or the ways in which locals were portrayed. Further, future studies could examine a wider variety of countries, employing a most-different design (Przeworski & Teune, 1970) in order to examine if the various influences discovered here also hold true against a variety of cultural backgrounds. The

choice for a most-similar design was a conscious one in this study as it particularly aimed to determine the influence of tourist behaviour in similar media systems, and the next step would be to move to a broader selection of nations to determine the wider application of the factors found. Analyses over time would also be of value in this context, as similar studies of foreign news flows have shown some of the variability of news reporting (Wilke, 1987). Combined with an analysis of relative spending on visiting journalist programs in the various countries, such studies could show the extent to which such programs may or may not influence the geography of travel journalism. Much remains to be explored in the representation of foreign countries beyond hard news, yet it appears an exciting and fruitful field of study which can contribute significantly to a more complete picture of how audiences experience the world through their news media.

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**Table 1: Amount of foreign travel stories and author gender**

	Number of stories	Number of stories per week	Foreign stories (%)
Australia	369	14.2	65
Canada	232	8.9	83.2
New Zealand	201	7.7	69.7
United Kingdom	272	10.5	73.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1074</b>	<b>41.3</b>	<b>71.9</b>

**Table 2: Coverage of world regions by country (in %)**

	Australia	Canada	New Zealand	United Kingdom	Total
<b>Africa</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Eastern Africa	1.3	1	0.7	3.5	1.7
Middle and Western Africa	0	1.6	0	1	0.6
Northern Africa	2.5	0	0.7	4	1.9
Southern Africa	1.3	0.5	2.9	1.5	1.4
<b>Americas</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>25.9</b>
Northern America	9.6	27.5	14.3	14	16
Central America and Caribbean	2.5	8.8	0.7	5.5	4.6
South America	4.6	7.3	2.9	6	5.3
<b>Asia</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23.3</b>
Central and Western Asia	2.9	8.3	1.4	4.5	4.4
Eastern Asia	10	5.7	6.4	1	6
Southern Asia	7.1	3.1	5.7	4	5
South-Eastern Asia	17.1	4.7	4.3	2.5	7.9
<b>Europe</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>32.5</b>
Eastern Europe	3.3	1.0	1.4	1.5	1.9
Northern and Western Europe	17.1	16.6	12.9	26.0	18.5
Southern Europe	8.8	10.9	10.7	18.0	12.0
<b>Oceania</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>12.7</b>
Australia and New Zealand	5.4	3.1	26.4	6.5	8.9
Pacific Islands	6.7	0.0	8.6	0.5	3.7

Differences in countries' attention to world regions statistically significant  $\chi^2(12)=165.309, p<.001, V=.267$

**Table 3: Diversity of foreign travel coverage**

	<b>Countries covered</b>	<b>Average stories per country</b>	<b>CCI (5)</b>	<b>CCI (10)</b>
Australia	71	3.37	33.3%	52.9%
Canada	59	3.27	45.6%	59.6%
New Zealand	42	3.33	50.7%	62.9%
United Kingdom	59	3.39	40.5%	55.5%

**Table 4: Top 10 destinations overall and compared to top tourism destinations**

		<b>Number of stories</b>	<b>%</b>			<b>Arrivals (in million)</b>	<b>%</b>
1	United States	113	10.5	1	France	74.2	8.4
2	Australia	54	5.0	2	United States	54.9	6.2
3	France	43	4.0	3	Spain	52.2	5.9
4	Italy	42	3.9	4	China	50.9	5.8
5	United Kingdom	40	3.7	5	Italy	43.2	4.9
6	India	27	2.5	6	United Kingdom	28	3.2
7	Thailand	22	2.0	7	Turkey	25.5	2.9
8	Spain	18	1.7	8	Germany	24.2	2.8
9	Argentina	16	1.5	9	Malaysia	23.6	2.7
10	Japan	16	1.5	10	Mexico	21.5	2.4
<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>391</b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>398.2</b>	<b>45.3</b>

**Table 5: Top 10 story and tourism by country****Australia**

Travel stories published				Tourism destinations <sup>1</sup>			
		Number of stories	%		Departures (in ,000s)		%
<b>1</b>	United Kingdom	20	8.3	<b>1</b>	New Zealand	955.3	16.3
<b>2</b>	United States	20	8.3	<b>2</b>	United States	500	8.6
<b>3</b>	Italy	14	5.8	<b>3</b>	Indonesia	436	7.5
<b>4</b>	New Zealand	13	5.4	<b>4</b>	United Kingdom	420.2	7.2
<b>5</b>	Thailand	13	5.4	<b>5</b>	Thailand	378.4	6.5
<b>6</b>	India	12	5	<b>6</b>	China	268	4.6
<b>7</b>	Indonesia	11	4.5	<b>7</b>	Fiji	220.9	3.8
<b>8</b>	France	10	4.1	<b>8</b>	Singapore	213.7	3.7
<b>9</b>	Japan	9	3.7	<b>9</b>	Malaysia	205.2	3.5
<b>10</b>	Hong Kong	6	2.5	<b>10</b>	Hong Kong	200.1	3.4
<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>128</b>	<b>52.9</b>	<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>330.8</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Overall total</b>		<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Overall total</b>		<b>5,843.2</b>	<b>100</b>

**Canada**

Travel stories published				Tourism destinations <sup>2</sup>			
		Number of stories	%		Departures (in million)		%
<b>1</b>	United States	53	27.5	<b>1</b>	United States	18	68.7
<b>2</b>	United Kingdom	12	6.2	<b>2</b>	Mexico	1.21	4.6
<b>3</b>	Italy	10	5.2	<b>3</b>	Cuba	0.98	3.7
<b>4</b>	France	7	3.6	<b>4</b>	Dominican Republic	0.88	3.3
<b>5</b>	China	6	3.1	<b>5</b>	United Kingdom	0.87	3.3
<b>6</b>	Israel	6	3.1	<b>6</b>	France	0.74	2.8
<b>7</b>	Turkey	6	3.1	<b>7</b>	Italy	0.36	1.4
<b>8</b>	Argentina	5	2.6	<b>8</b>	Germany	0.31	1.2
<b>9</b>	India	5	2.6	<b>9</b>	China	0.26	1
<b>10</b>	Mexico	5	2.6	<b>10</b>	Netherlands	0.26	1
<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>115</b>	<b>59.6</b>	<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>23.87</b>	<b>91.1</b>
<b>Overall total</b>		<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Overall total</b>		<b>26.20</b>	<b>100</b>

**New Zealand**

Travel stories published				Tourism destinations <sup>3</sup>			
		Number of stories	%		Departures (in ,000s)		%
<b>1</b>	Australia	37	26.4	<b>1</b>	Australia	944.3	49.2
<b>2</b>	United States	15	10.7	<b>2</b>	Fiji	92.3	4.8
<b>3</b>	United Kingdom	8	5.7	<b>3</b>	United States	88.1	4.6
<b>4</b>	Italy	6	4.3	<b>4</b>	United Kingdom	87.4	4.6
<b>5</b>	India	5	3.6	<b>5</b>	China	56.3	2.9
<b>6</b>	Canada	4	2.9	<b>6</b>	Cook Islands	55.7	2.9

<b>7</b>	Spain	4	2.9	<b>7</b>	Samoa	41.4	2.2
<b>8</b>	China	3	2.1	<b>8</b>	Thailand	30.6	1.6
<b>9</b>	Cook Islands	3	2.1	<b>9</b>	India	29.0	1.5
<b>10</b>	Fiji	3	2.1	<b>10</b>	Canada	19.4	1
<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>88</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>1,444.4</b>	<b>75.3</b>
<b>Overall total</b>		<b>140</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Overall total</b>		<b>1,918.32</b>	<b>100</b>

#### United Kingdom

Travel stories published				Tourism destinations <sup>4</sup>			
		<b>Number of stories</b>	<b>%</b>			<b>Departures (in million)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1</b>	United States	25	12.5	<b>1</b>	Spain	11.58	19.8
<b>2</b>	France	23	11.5	<b>2</b>	France	9.76	16.7
<b>3</b>	Australia	13	6.5	<b>3</b>	Ireland	3.55	6.1
<b>4</b>	Italy	12	6.0	<b>4</b>	United States	3.19	5.4
<b>5</b>	Spain	8	4.0	<b>5</b>	Italy	2.61	4.5
<b>6</b>	Germany	7	3.5	<b>6</b>	Germany	2.13	3.6
<b>7</b>	Greece	7	3.5	<b>7</b>	Greece	1.88	3.2
<b>8</b>	Turkey	7	3.5	<b>8</b>	Netherlands	1.84	3.1
<b>9</b>	India	5	2.5	<b>9</b>	Portugal	1.81	3.1
<b>10</b>	Argentina	4	2.0	<b>10</b>	Turkey	1.62	2.8
<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>111</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>Total Top 10</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>68.2</b>
<b>Overall total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Overall total</b>		<b>59</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Figures express total departures for July 2008 to June 2009. Available at

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/3401.0Feature%20Article1Jun%202009?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3401.0&issue=Jun%202009&num=&view=>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Statistics Canada. Figures express total departures for 2009. Available at

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/66-201-x/2009000/t044-eng.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Source: Statistics New Zealand. Figures express total departures for 2009. Available at:

[http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/Migration/IntTravelAndMigration\\_HOTPD09.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/Migration/IntTravelAndMigration_HOTPD09.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> Source: Office for National Statistics. Figures express total departures for 2009. Available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ott/travel-trends/2009/index.html>